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Subject: Hindrances to Christian Development.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

I. The Duty of Using One's Life for Others. II. The God of Comfort. III. The Nobility of Confession. IV. Self-Control Possible to All. V. Pilate, and his Modern Imitators. VI. The Strong to Bear with the Weak. VII. Growth in the Knowledge of God. VIII. Contentment in all Things. IX. Abhorrence of Evil. X. Privileges of the Christian. XI. The Love of Money. XII. Divine Influence on the Human Soul. XIII. Moral Affinity, the True Ground of Unity. XIV. The Value of Deep Feelings. XV. Works Meet for Repentance. XVI. Malign Spiritual Influences. XVII. The Old and the New. XVIII. The Hidden Christ. XIX. Well-Wishing not Well-Doing. XX. Sphere of the Christian Minister. XXI. Suffering, the Measure of Worth. XXII. The Victory of Hope in Sorrow. XXIII. The Crime of Degrading Men. XXIV. Self-Conceit in Morals. XXV. Morality, the Basis of Piety. XXVI. The Trinity. XXVII. The Family, as an American Institution

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HINDERANCES

TO

CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT.

SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 20, 1869.

"WILT thou be made whole?"—JOHN v. 6.

THE history from which this passage is selected I have already recited in your hearing.

These were the words of the Saviour, addressed to one long crippled by a paralytic trouble. There was a medicinal or medical spring, it seems, which was so much resorted to that it was built over for the accommodation of those that thronged it. There were "five porches," or balconies. At certain times the water bubbled up, seeming to bring up elements that had curative power.

It is stated in the context that at a certain period an angel went down "and troubled the water." That verse, however, is undoubtedly spurious, and does not belong here. Many suppose that if a passage is to be excluded from the text of Scripture, the intrusion of it is evidence of intended fraud; and that the adulteration of the sacred text was for the purpose of deception. If you will consider for a moment how these things mostly arose, you will see that they were rather mistakes than intended fraud, and that they do not in any way invalidate the text that remains. For formerly there was no printing. He that should take a printed book, and insert another passage, or any thing in addition to what it contained, could not justify himself very well. It would be *prima facie* evidence of intent to deceive—to foist upon the author something that did not belong to him. But all books formerly were manuscripts, continuous rolls; and it was a literary habit, where a passage seemed obscure, to add, either between the lines or in the margin—sometimes in one

LESSON: John v. 1-16. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 1278, 898, 755.

place, and sometimes in another—corrections or explanations. The next copyist, not being, perhaps, so intelligent; being troubled somewhat with stupidity, or having it without being troubled with it, copied, it may be, along with the text, these explanations, which had been made purely for the convenience of the one who went before. And so it passed on down. All copies springing from that one were vitiated by additions which never were intended to add any thing, but were simply meant to be a commentary. Thus, by the fault of the copyist, there came to be included in the text what did not belong to it. And this verse, by the great majority of commentators and critical judges of Scripture text, is now rejected—the verse in which it is declared: "An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water. Whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." And I call your attention to it, not because there is any thing contained in it which is difficult to be believed. If we accept Scripture, we may as well accept the whole of it. And there is nothing intrinsically absurd, nothing difficult, here. I merely exclude it because it does not belong here.

This man had not staid at the pool for this whole period. It is said that he "had an infirmity thirty and eight years." It is not said that he had tarried there thirty and eight years. That was simply the length of time during which he had been thus afflicted. How long he had hovered about the pool we do not know. It might have been weeks, and it might have been months.

Our Saviour singled him out, and put this question to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He replies that he would; but that when the waters are troubled, and he is about to creep down into them, being crippled and infirm, and having no one to put him in, some other one steps in. It is not implied that the stepping in of others took the virtue out of the water, but that the pool was filled all the time during which that agitation took place which bore up from the earth its medicinal qualities. And so, being excluded, he waits till the next time. And the next time the same mishap befalls him. Others less crippled than he crowd in. The result is, that he is continually kept out.

I need not say that there is a striking analogy between the case here narrated, and what is going on in life all the time. I might, if that were my purpose, undertake to show that in this world there are periodic stirrings of the healing fountain; that there are times of gracious reviving; that men throng the "porches," as it were—the vestibule of the temple; and that persons are healed who have suffered not only "thirty and eight years," but oftentimes much longer than that. I might follow out the analogy quite closely, showing that

when a patient would step in, another goes down before him—that is, that pleasure steps in and hinders him; or, business steps in and hinders him; or, ambition steps in and hinders him; or, the bias and sympathy of friendship steps in and hinders him. But I purpose to take a more general view, and make a larger use of this incident—to discuss some of the hinderances which serious-minded men find in their approach to a Christian experience, and to the beginnings of an earnest and thorough Christian life.

There are thousands of men in Christendom, and there are hundreds of men in such a community as this, who are conscientious, serious-minded, reflective men, but still are not Christians; who seem to approach, in many respects, very near to a Christian life, and are vehemently moved at times, but are met by certain hinderances which prevent them. I wish to have a candid discussion of some of those hinderances. It is not my purpose to maltreat them; it is not my purpose to deride them, or to blame them, or to undertake to show that every man is disgraced by doubts and skepticisms. I would treat them in a much larger, more sympathetic, and, as I think, truly Gospel spirit, than that.

There are many persons who are hindered at the beginning of a Christian life, from a vague sense which they have working through veneration, and through the imagination, of the magnitude of the enterprise and the importance of religion, (which has been not improperly held out to them,) and the greatness of the results which it proposes. These serve, in their particular instances, to make the difficulty yet worse. They have the impression that they are, as it were, to lift the world upon their shoulders. But although they conceive the accomplishment of a Christian life to be of transcendent importance, yet how they shall shoulder the world, how, like Atlas, they shall take the globe upon them, they do not see. They are cautious; perhaps they are timid; usually they are conscientious; and they feel that their strength and resolution are not adequate to so great a thing as the amplitude of Christian life. They can not swing it.

If religion called men to take the service of the Lord Jesus Christ at first in its full-orbed and perfected form, this hinderance would be valid and irremovable. If we were to be translated from a state of imperfection, of partialism, of undevelopment, of life in the lower faculties, and death in the higher, and were, at one spring, so to speak, to mount up to the higher experiences, we might well pause and wait, not alone for the troubling of the water by the angel's descent, but for the power of Omnipotence itself, to transform us. But it is not so. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three

measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Our Master himself says, "Except ye become as little children"—except ye go back on knowledge; except ye go from complexity to simplicity; except ye go from much to little; except ye begin at the minimum, at the smallest point, and go up step by step—"ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." And though a man might well hesitate to assume at once all the responsibilities of the final perfection of Christian experience, need any man shrink from taking the first steps? For, consider that the beginnings have no variation—that there is no difference between them. The beginning of a pyramid, and the beginning of the smallest monument, is of the same magnitude. It is no harder to begin a pyramid than to begin a small monument, though the work completed may be far more ample in the one case than in the other. Whether a man is going to build a mansion or a hovel, to begin it is the same, substantially. The same gate that lets you out to go a mile, lets you out to go a hundred or a thousand miles. The first step in all these cases is just the same. It takes no more labor to begin a journey of a thousand miles, than it does to begin a journey across the street to your neighbor's. If a man means to educate himself for a mechanic, for an engineer, for any department of art life, or for some minor sphere, toward the material world, and the uses of things, the first steps are just the same. Whether a man seeks universal knowledge, or knowledge in some particular direction, there is no difference between the first approaches.

In entering upon a Christian life, then, we are not to propose to ourselves to instantly take upon our shoulders all the duties and experiences and growths that are to run through scores of years. The question is, whether you are willing to take the child's step toward this consummation. Are you willing to begin, though the beginning is no larger than a grain of mustard-seed? Are you willing to begin, though the beginning does not amount to more than that silent purpose which lies deep hidden in the soul, but which works there as yeast works hidden in the flour?

There are others who, though not tangled by this difficulty, are seriously embarrassed by another. They are caught in morbid intellectualism, and are stuck upon the spines and thorns of some doctrinal problem; so that they can not pass beyond it, nor get away from it. There are many who have been brought up under such teaching that they fail to separate between religion and the doctrines that lead or minister to religion. They fail to separate between the facts of Christian life and those so-called philosophical facts which the schools have affirmed. And so, men called to be made whole, and really feeling an impulse to be larger spiritually, and to have some commerce with heaven and some communion with God, and having been

brought up according to the strictest sect, it may be of one school, or it may be of another—such men have their doctrinal difficulties. And until these are removed, they say, "The way is embarrassed; I can not go forward." With one, it is the doctrine of "reprobation;" with another, it is the doctrine of "election;" and with another it is the doctrine of "foreordination." They have never learned how to let such things alone. And these doctrinal difficulties are very much like such difficulties as a steed feels that is galled by an over-tight harness. If the owner goes and draws up the buckle one or two holes, will it relieve him? The tighter you pull, the more you gall. And these morbid intellectual difficulties frequently become worse and worse by discussion. For they are insoluble, most of them. No man can frame the Infinite into a proportional form. No man can measure God by words; and still less can a man measure the infinite divine government by words. No man can compress these things into a formula in such a way that he can say, "I have found out God; I have solved these great problems concerning the Infinite; I have reconciled them." The man who thinks he has done this stamps himself instantly as narrow. And yet, there are many who suppose it to be their indispensable duty to do it. They regard themselves as engineers, as it were, who are required to open a street, a narrow way, in order that men may put their feet in it, and walk toward the heavenly land.

I do not say that discussions on abstract philosophical questions have not certain benefits. But I do say that, though it is pleasanter to eat with a sharp knife than with a dull one, a man can make a very good meal without any knife at all. These sharp questions are good to whet a man's faculties; but though his faculties are not whet, if he rests upon the simple faith of love in Christ Jesus, if he is guided merely by the hunger of his soul to be made whole or better, he can lead a very good Christian life. It is not necessary that he should solve the questions relating to the nature of God, or of the divine government. He may let them alone.

So I say, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and its"—what did the Saviour say? "Seek first the kingdom of God, and its"—catechism? No, that was not it. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and its"—confession of faith? No, that was not it. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and its"—doctrine? No, that was not it. What was it? "Seek first the kingdom of God and its *righteousness.*" Let practice and experience precede philosophy. After you have got these, then coördinate them, and make your own philosophy. First, true life; afterward, the theory of that life.

There are others who are hindered by what may be called the fragments and ruins of past attempts. Among these are secret histo-

ries that will become wondrous in the eternal world. The struggles of thought, the struggles of moral feeling, the yearnings and blind seekings of earnest men, are among the most affecting things in this world, to those who have an eye to discern them and a heart to measure them. There are many persons who have sought a religious life, and have entered upon it, under such misconstructions and mistakes, or have been met and buffeted by such influences, that every thing in them, either of sentiment, or honor, or conscience, or taste, or pride, has been almost fatally wounded. There are those who have, in years gone by, been praying men, and happy praying men, but who have lapsed from their high religious state. There are those who have walked in the Christian life, and have, in some sense, borne a shining testimony, in their day, but who have stumbled and fallen away from it.

There grows up in the mind, frequently, a soreness, a positive repellency, a kind of morbid resistance, to the very first approaches toward a religious state. It sometimes requires years to heal wounds that have resulted from these experiences.

Others become torpid and dead. They seem to have lost spiritual fire in youth. While enthusiasm was yet strong, they felt that there was a reality in religion; but it having proved a mockery in their case, it may be, they come to have the impression that there is nothing of it.

But there are a great many who do not fall so far, and who bury their hearts within them. They hope that yet, some time, they shall have a saving knowledge of Christ, but they are without any definite purposes. They have faith in religion; they have some remote sympathy for it; they have a certain gladness at seeing others enter the Christian life; there are occasional periods in which the old tide rises up in them; yet, in the main, they hold on their way, and the old abortive experience of a Christian life hinders them.

It is a great misfortune to have made such a mistake; but if it has pleased God, in spite of that mistake, to continue moral sensibility; if you have not lost respect for Christian truth and for Christian ordinances; if you have not lost the desire, however small it may be, and however latent it may be, to live a truly religious life, then you should bless God that there is yet hope and a chance for you. For the mistakes that you have made once, and twice, and thrice, are no reasons why you should not, with better light, with ampler experience, and with other influences, regain the lost ground.

One thing is certain, that, whether or not you have been on the true ground, no man can afford to consign himself to everlasting selfishness and pride and ignominy, because he has made a mistake in attempting to be healed. No man does that in his body. There is

many a man that finally recovers, who says, "Oh! if I had known the benefits of water-cure, how many years I would have been spared of seeking for health?" How many persons there are who have fulfilled the experience of the woman in the Gospel, who for years had an issue of blood, and suffered by many physicians, and got nothing better, but much worse; who spent her substance in trying to get well, and got nothing from it; and who at last, at the word of the Saviour, was sovereignly healed! No mistakes ever for one moment hinder a man if it is bodily sickness. If there is the ever-waiting pain; if there is the perpetual infirmity; if there is the foot or the hand, that, crippled, refuses to do its duty; and if life is yet before you, and others are gay and active—under such circumstances you do not give up. "Oh! for health! *Oh! for health!*" says the sick body. If there was but that same feeling in regard to the sick soul, there would be no trouble.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" saith the Saviour. The question is not, "How many of you have tried the faith?" It is not, "How long have you suffered?" It is simply this: "Wilt thou now be made whole?" While you still turn your eye back morbidly upon your own mistakes, there is but little chance for you; but if you rouse up from this backward-looking selfishness—for this ever-repeating consciousness finally falls into selfishness; if you cease any longer to think so much about the past; if, forgetting the things that are behind, you press forward to the things that are before; if there be in you yet a springing, yearning desire to enter at once and fully upon the Christian course; and if you say to the Saviour, "Yes, I fain would be made whole," then your mistakes are not fatal, and there is no reason why, having failed once, or twice, or thrice, you should not strive again.

It is said of Bruce, that, in prison, and discouraged with the heat of his campaign for the liberties of his country, he in moody thoughts meditated giving up the struggle; but as he lay and thought, a spider, spinning down, caught his web upon some point, and almost fell to the floor. Not daunted, it crept up and back, and started again; and missed again. And again it tried, and fell again. It went through seven trials, and finally, on the eighth, caught, and established itself. And then, with a base-line laid, it formed its web. Bruce took heart from that, through rebuke, and determined never to give up the struggle. And at last victory came.

Oh! that spiders might teach us! Oh! that from the persevering ingenuity of the animal kingdom, we might be persuaded to weave not alone the web of our earthly plans and measures, but that more glorious cord that is to connect us with the eternal, and the joy and blessedness of immortality!

I shall not speak of the hinderances which are the result of the inspection of the lives of Christian men. There are hinderances of this kind; but I am speaking of those that are less unworthy; those that belong to generous and noble minds. The man who makes the example of Christians round about him the pretense of hinderance, stamps himself as ignoble. He knows that this has nothing to do with his own case. However other men may be cowardly, that is no reason why he should not be courageous. However other men may lie, that is no reason why he should tell falsehoods. However other men may be unreliable in business life, that is no reason why he should not be reliable in business life. And however imperfect men may be in their moral lives, that has nothing to do with the obligation of every man to live a high and pure and holy life. And when I hear men pleading the insincerity and inconsistency of Christians as a reason why they themselves are not Christians, I know that they want an excuse, and that they search for one. I pass by such cases, therefore, without respectful consideration.

I mention, next, the debilitating effect of skeptical doubts upon the moral sense. There are a great many who can not accept religion as a mere fact. There are a great many on whose minds are thronging thousands of thoughts. There are those who come to religion from the side of the household, and from the side of their affections. And they can not doubt. Blessed be that man who had such a father and mother that, as long as the memory of father and mother lives, he can not doubt. Under such circumstances, whatever the intellect may do, the heart rectifies it. The intellect may write "Skepticism," but the heart rubs it out, and writes "Love." But many have no such childhood, no such teaching, and no such association. My memory goes back to the Sabbaths of my childhood; to the bright hill-top; to the church-bell; and, so long as I remember these things, and have a vision of my mother, and a recollection of my father, I can not doubt religion. But there are many who had no such parents—or none within their remembrance. Many have had their whole life's training in the most material elements; some in artistic relations; some in realms of doubt; some in intellectual gladiation. Men come to the subject of religion from entirely different points. And when men come to religion in such ways that they have in themselves no moral witness to the truth, and have suggestions and doubts that they do not seek, but that are forced upon them, there is a certain respect to be paid them, and a certain sympathy to be experienced for them.

I do not undertake to measure such persons on the scale of guilt at all. I am not speaking of their fault-worthiness. I am simply speaking of the dynamic influence on a man's feelings and purposes of absolutely disbelieving a thing, or only doubting it. Such is the

nature of things that we live by faith, and not by sight, in respect to the whole realm of the invisible, from which that power is to be derived by which the soul is to be rectified. Once let a man doubt, and that is enough. It breaks his power of believing. There are thousands of men that would be far from saying, "I disbelieve," but that do not believe. They would only say, "I am uncertain;" but to be uncertain is enough. When mighty winds blow, it is not necessary that a tree should be torn up by the roots to be destroyed. On the hillside I have seen young fruit-trees so bent over that their roots have been, not pulled out of the ground, but broken away from their anchorage in the soil, so that the trees were lying at an acute angle with the ground. They have received a shock, and perhaps a fatal shock. The roots are there under the ground; but they are broken away from their contact with the living earth, and the material food that is in it.

I have seen many persons who were bent by the winds of doubt. They are so moved that the root is impaired, and no longer performs the office of collecting food and sending it up through the whole organization. And such persons, as I have said, are as much objects of sympathy as of blame. I do not say that they are free from guilt before God; but I do say that it is not good policy for us to tread them down, to fix upon them a stigma, to undertake to dragoon their consciences, or to treat them other than with that compassion or pity with which a benevolent surgeon or physician looks upon the symptoms of mortal sickness in any of his patients.

I say, then, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Whatever may be your doubts and your difficulties, is there not a point of health left? Whatever may be the systems of philosophy under the influence of which you have been brought up, are you not conscious, personally and experimentally, that you are in a low moral state? Are you not conscious that there is a want of spirituality in you? Are you not conscious that you need the inflammation, the summer-fire of the Holy Ghost? Are you not conscious that there is needed in your soul something that shall lift you into a larger manhood? Are you content? Have you nothing to desire in yourself? Do you accomplish your ideals? Have you marked the frame-work of character? and have you filled it up? Are you not leaving out the revealed truths of Christian manhood? Are you, even on the pattern of mere secular manhood, what you would be? Are there no continually-dropping faults? Are there no eating sins? Are there no bondages of pride and selfishness? Are you not subject to evil influences in such a way that you hold up your hands, and cry out, often and often, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

To such Christ comes, as he came to the poor sick man of the

porch, and says, "Though the ordinary means of healing do not avail for thee, wilt thou be made whole?" There is healing in the Lord Jesus Christ even for men who do not know what they believe; who doubt other people's belief. There is a spiritual point where grace can take hold and heal souls, though little by little, from the experimental point, they shall find their way out from the solution of the difficulties which hinder them.

There is another hinderance, of the subtle and interior kind, belonging to the genus of which I am treating. There are those, the habit of whose minds converts moral impressions into ideas, rather than into actions. There are those who tend toward thought, rather than toward disposition, and thus become reverists, instead of practical and living Christians. There are those who are so familiar with the Bible that it is worn smooth. Their wheels slip, as it were, on the track. There are a great many whom nothing seems to touch sharply and closely; and in so far as they have had thoughts on this subject, they have been thoughts that have run off into reverie. They smoulder. There is no flame in them. There are men who are like charcoal heaps. The burner goes to the mountain, cuts down trees of every kind, reduces them to the proper lengths, stacks them up, puts earth over them, pats down the sod, opens a hole, and puts in his fire. Then the flame takes hold. Instantly, however, the heap is tightly covered again, and then is left. And now the fire eats, and eats, and eats; and without any disclosure of itself. There is not air enough to create a blaze, and the whole mass is turned into charcoal. The form of the wood is left, but the living principle is gone. The whole is carbonized.

There are a great many men who never once break out into flame. They are, as it were, compacted of thoughts and feelings which are so covered up, and so smothered, that they never have disclosure. There is a process of inward consumption going on. They are given to reverie; to thinking about things; to turning them over in the mind; to taking them up and laying them down; to drawing them on, and putting them off.

Have you never seen, on a hot, sweltering summer day, a boy at his studies? He takes up his book, and opens it at a given place, and reads a little. He does not want to read there, so he opens it at another place, and reads a little there. He does not want to read there, either, and turns to another place, and reads a little. He takes up another book, and looks at the pictures. He takes up another book. It is bottom-side up; but he does not know it. He takes up another book. And so he listlessly drifts. All the summer afternoon he has been busy with his books; but he has not gained one single idea. He is in a state of reverie all the time.

What would you think of a mechanic who should go to his bench, prepossessed by some sorrow or joy, and thoughtlessly take up his chisel, and cut with it here; and lay that down, and take up his compass, and mark out some work there; and lay it aside, and take up his saw, and draw it once or twice; and then take up his plane; and so run through his whole kit of tools, without any aim or object, framing nothing, doing nothing, accomplishing no result, simply beginning one thing and then another?

So men do, precisely, in religion. The problem with every man is, How will you establish manhood on a moral basis? How will you begin at the smallest point, and carry up your life on a higher plane, with a noble purpose, and with daily accretions and victories? But men, instead of doing any thing, think about this thing and that. They think about the poetry of religion. They think about the sermons that they have heard, and turn them over in their mind. They are said to be *thoughtful*. They say, "I have religion much in my mind." Yes, it is in their mind as a reverie. They are like smokers. A man goes into his study, and puts his feet on the stove, and rocks, and takes his pipe, and smokes for ideas! And soon the ideas curl up about his head! And the room is full of ideas at last! And there are thousands of men who treat religion in very much the same way. They are after ideas. And what more do they get than vague, pleasing, but absolutely useless reverie? There is a very bad habit of digestion where every thing turns to reverie. Men ought to reduce thoughts to purposes, and purposes to results. That is the true, manly course. Not they are the real wise men, who use their mind as a mill, and ceaselessly grind their thoughts, like wheat, but never get so far as to make a loaf of bread.

There are those who have a vague impression that religion demands a professional and ecclesiastical character, which, although it may be necessary, is repulsive. There are many who feel that religion is to life, and to eternal life, what a court dress, in Europe, is to an ambassador. If one follows the fashion of the European courts, he can not go before the king on royal receptions, except in the ridiculous equipage which is prescribed, and which is designed as far as possible to make a man look like a monkey. And though it may be repulsive to his taste, the man says, "I am here as ambassador, and this is purely professional; and although I laugh at this wig, and this sword, and all these trimmings, as unworthy of a man, yet I submit to them, and discharge my duty in them."

Many people seem to think that grace is a sort of suit cut out for a man; that a man must become a Christian in some regular way; that he must have this or that kind of experience, or he can not be a Christian; that Christianity has prescribed certain ecclesiastical con-

ditions. And men say, "Rather than be lost, I prefer to become a Christian." But the thing itself is repulsive to them. They see no beauty in the life, and no beauty in the idea.

I present distinctly the other view. That is the representation of the ascetic; but I call men not to the assumption of things disagreeable. If there is one single thing obligatory upon a man, which, when viewed from the right stand-point, is homely and unlovely, it does not belong to Christianity. Christianity is in its very nature the endowing of a man with royalty of character. It is the making things strong, and sweet, and fruitful, and beautiful. Beauty, and liberty, and life, and power, belong to every single element to which a man is called in the Christian life. And I preach Christ and the Christian life, not because they are necessary to bridge over death, and save a man from damnation. I preach them as the only way in which a man can fulfill his nature; as the only way in which a man can rightly develop his reason, and subordinate passion to moral sentiment; as the only way in which moral sentiment can come to all its blossoms, and to all its beauty. It is the best part of a man's nature that Christianity liberates. Without religion, a man is like gold which is hidden in a mountain. With it, he is like the gold when it is dug out, and becomes coin, or is made into ten thousand beautiful objects. Without religion, a man is as a seed. With it, he is as the oak which is developed from that seed—or the wine that has been produced from that seed—or the flowers that have sprung from that seed.

If a man, therefore, looks upon the Christian life, and says, "Oh! it is a dreary, cross-bearing, sighing, solitary kind of life!" I say it is not. If he says, "It is not the life for the young eagle, or the lion," I say it is just the life for the young eagle, and that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" is its model. The eagle is the very symbol employed; and God calls us eaglets, to be borne aloft by his power.

I call you to no suicidal, crippling process. I call you to no such idea of crucifixion and separation as takes away any part of a true, real, manly development. I call men to *nature*. I call men back to God *in nature*. I call men to magnitude, to glory, to power, and to liberty, such as can not belong to those who serve the flesh, and such as belong only to those who live in the spirit, and for the spirit.

If there be those, then, who are hindered by a misconception of what Christian character means, I pray you, revolutionize your conceptions. Your hinderances will drop as soon as you have a right idea of a true Christian life and character.

I will not pursue further a consideration of these hinderances to-night. I will only, in closing, say that the very central point of all is this—that every man, whatever be his hinderances, should be faithful to the inward yearning and longing to be made whole. If that

lives, and you are true to it, there is hope for you. So long as a man aspires; so long as a man does not count himself unworthy of eternal life; so long as a man does not abandon, or cover over and bury the thought in the text, and consign himself to an ignominious indifference; so long as a man has a palpitating consciousness measuring his life, and his thoughts, and his ambitions, and his conduct; so long as he feels his imperfection; so long as all the pride in him is a noble pride; so long as he is discontented, and from day to day yearns for higher possibilities—so long there is hope for him. And Christ comes to such, saying, "Wilt thou be made whole?" There is a way where there is a will; and nowhere else so much as in religion.

What if you are at the extremest remove from the faith which we hold? You are a child of God. Whatever may be your education in ecclesiasticism, and whatever old notions, or theologies, and philosophies, you may have, human nature is common to all men, and alike in all. And if you have a yearning desire for something higher and nobler and better, this very desire is the call of God in your soul. It is the voice of Christ, saying to each of you, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Are there not those here to-night who have drifted long enough? O children of faithful parents! O men who for years and years have lived to violate your own convictions! O ye that have submitted to the bondage of this world, and felt all the time that it was an ignominious bondage! are there none of you that, out of the prison-house, hold up your hands and cry for deliverance? Are there none who are in bondage to unworthy habits? Are there none that shake their chains and say, "Who will deliver us from this bondage?" Are there none here to-night who look back upon the time that is spent and past? Are there none to whom sad feelings come sighing, as in autumn, when the leaves fall, and the wind sighs through the fields and the forests? Is there no autumnal feeling breathing over your souls to-night, and awaking yearnings and longings? Can you see men fall before you; can you see ambitions explode; can you behold the hollowness and baseness of the world; and then can you look forward into immortality; can you ask yourself, "What shall become of this yearning and longing? Where shall affections bloom? Is this the end of them? Where is my child? Where is she that was dearer to me than my own self? Where are those that taught me? Am I a wanderer alone? Am I to be puffed out as a candle? Am I no more than a candle's flame?"—can you look upon these things, and ask yourself these questions, and not be concerned?

Let rattling and discordant creeds alone. Do not mind the quarrels of churches. Listen to your own inward want. Hear your

own heart. Believe the testimony of your own conscience. Give heed to your own reason. In all these things is the voice of the Saviour that is passing by. You who twenty, or thirty, or eight and thirty years, it may be, have been lying crippled and helpless, hear Christ saying to you, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou, O Lord! art the searcher of the spirit. Thou knowest the heart altogether. We do not know thee, but thou knowest us. Naked and open are we before Him with whom we have to do. And yet we are commanded to come boldly before thee. Thy knowledge is not for our condemnation. Thy thoughts are thoughts of mercy, and thy knowledge is for salvation. And we beseech of thee that we may from day to day draw near with boldness and simplicity, with sincere penitence, with earnest desires, that we may be godly, living above this present world while living in it, with purer motives, with nobler aims, with a better endeavor than other men. Because we are called by thy name, may we have thy spirit, walk in thy footsteps, bear about thy precious example, and be, according to the measure of our knowledge and our strength, to others what thou art to us. Forgive the deficiency of our past lives. Forgive the outright sins which we have committed. Our forgetfulness, our heedlessness, our infirmities—we beseech of thee not only that thou wilt pass them by, but that thou wilt give us strength in time to come. For we desire, not so much to remove pain and penalty, as to remove impurity and selfishness and pride. It is not so much joy that we seek, as that we may have a better manhood, nobler thoughts, truer purposes, and purer hearts, and be more gracious and generous and beneficent, as thou art. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant unto us that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If there are any who look upon the Christian life wistfully, and desire to enter therein, but are hindered, O Lord! we pray that thou wilt take away the hinderances, or teach them to remove them. Confirm all good resolutions. Inspire resolutions in those who have been careless and heedless. We pray that thou wilt consummate the work where it has begun. If there are those who are beginning to turn their thoughts to God, who are adding one or two purposes, but who are not yet entering in earnest and fully upon the Christian course, O Lord! we pray that thou wilt quicken them, that thou wilt give them a whole heart, that they may seek thee with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And may this greatest gift of God, the revelation of Christ Jesus, in the experience of our hearts, be granted to every one here—especially to those who are taught—to those that have been from childhood instructed in things pertaining to their salvation.

Remember, we pray thee, consecrated ones. Remember those that have been promised unto thee. Remember those whom parents have brought up in the ways of the Lord. Far from thee they may have gone; but not beyond thy reach nor thy mercy. If they be enthralled, if they are tempted more than they can bear, oh! suffer them not to be overthrown and to become castaways. Bring back the wandering. Restore them to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt help each one of us to help others. May those that are joined together in life in a holy friendship help each other, and beware of hindering one another. May we put no burdens upon others. May we see to it that our example, that our disposition, that our very privileges and rights, are not made yokes of bondage to others. While we seek our own liberty, may we likewise seek the liberty of others round about us.

Grant that we may be steadfast in the divine life. And as the days go on, and our years are more and more numbered and passed away; as we behold the mortality of men, and see on how frail a foundation the strongest stand—grant that we may be more earnest, and that we may fulfill the will of our God. May we do with our might what our hands find to do. The night cometh, when no man can labor.

Bless the services of the evening—the word of instruction, the songs of praise, our communion of prayer, our fellowship one with another. Accept our thanksgiving for all the many blessings with which this day has been freighted.

We beseech of thee that thus thou wilt advance us from Sunday to Sunday, until at last we are prepared to rise and enter that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt add thy blessing to the word of truth spoken. May it go forth with power. May it find some. May it excite again the accustomed feeling. May it lead some minds to new purposes. May there be some that shall begin, from this night, according to the measure of their strength and the light that is shining on their path, to walk in the Christian life. Oh! reveal thyself, thou that art the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; thou whom the sun can not help for brightness; thou whom all the earth, in its summer beauty, is not fit to represent. O thou Prince and glorious God and Father! manifest thyself to longing souls. Find those that can not find themselves. Speak to those that will not speak to thee. Heal those that are dying for lack of medicine. Glorify thyself.

And thy name shall have the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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30	7,500	708	2,708	10,208
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NEW-YORK, July 13th, 1869.

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☞ Business Men, and Property-Holders of all classes, can not fail to note the great additional protection and security extended in its Policies, by the Scrip Fund, which now exceeds, and in fact more than **doubles the Capital**; and, with the accumulated premiums, presents over **three times** the amount of the Capital as indemnity to those insured by the Company.

FIGURES FOR JULY 1st, 1869.

Cross Assets, - - - - - - - - -	**$651,586 28**
Capital, - - - - - - - - - - -	**200,000 00**
ACTUAL SURPLUS, - - - - - -	**418,361 51**

*(Over **200** per cent on the Capital ! !)*

The Directors announce a Cash Dividend of **Six and one half** (6½) per cent to the Stockholders, payable on demand.

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STATEMENT OF JANUARY 1, 1869:

Cash Capital, . . .	$500,000 00
Surplus, ...	1,566,854 10
Cash Assets, . . .	2,066,854 10

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